

The Second Punic War

After the end of the First Punic War, the Carthaginians recovered from their losses in Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia by extending their power in Spain. Suspicious of the Carthaginians' reasons for fighting in Spain, the Romans made a treaty with them, by which Carthage would not advance its power beyond the Ebro River in Spain. Rome also promised help to the people of the Spanish town Saguntum, which lay on the Carthaginians' side of the Ebro, if the Carthaginians attacked them.

In 221 B.C. Hasdrubal, the general of the Carthaginian army, died and his brother-in-law Hannibal succeeded him. Hannibal's father Hamilcar had been a general in the first war with Rome and was very bitter about Rome's victory and double-dealing over Corsica and Sardinia. Hannibal inherited the hatred that his country and father felt for Rome.

"They say that when he was almost nine years old, Hannibal, seeing his father Hamilcar giving a sacrifice before taking his army to Spain, tried, like a child, to sweet-talk his father into taking him along; after being taken to the altar, Hannibal touched the sacred objects there and was made to swear an oath that he would be an enemy of the Roman people as soon as he could" (Livy XXI.1.4). Hannibal did not disappoint his father.

Hannibal continued Carthage's conquests in Spain, moving ever closer to Saguntum and the Ebro River. Finally, in 219 he attacked Saguntum itself. The Roman Senate protested to the Carthaginian government, but the Carthaginian nobles supported their general, and the Senate's inaction let Hannibal conquer and enslave the

town. Before the town was stormed, many of the townspeople built a huge fire and threw their riches in it, rather than let Carthage have them; then they threw themselves into the fire. While his soldiers were subduing the town, Hannibal ordered them to kill all Saguntine men of military age. He gained an enormous amount of loot from the city, in spite of the citizens' sacrifices.

The Senate sent another embassy to Carthage to ascertain whether or not the city still supported its general. When the Carthaginians maintained that Hannibal had acted legally and with their support, the Roman ambassador, Q. Fabius, gathered together the folds of the part of the toga covering his chest, so that they appeared to contain something, and said, "Here we offer you peace or war. Take which you will."

"You can give whichever you want!" shouted the Carthaginian senate. Fabius let the folds of his toga drop and said that he brought war. The Carthaginians roared, "We accept! You can be sure that we'll fight the war as courageously as we declared it!" (Livy XXI.18.13).

HANNIBAL CROSSES THE ALPS

With his army of perhaps fifty thousand men, which had bonded into a tight and cohesive force through the many years of fighting in Spain, Hannibal seized the initiative and marched on Italy. An advance Roman force under P. Cornelius Scipio sailed to Massilia (modern Marseille), in southern Gaul, to await Hannibal, but Hannibal fooled the Romans by moving much more quickly than they expected. When Scipio arrived at Massilia, Hannibal had passed by three days earlier and was already approaching the Alps. Scipio then returned to Italy to meet Hannibal there. Then Hannibal fooled the Romans again: They expected him to cross the Alps in the easy places, close to the sea, but he headed toward the part of the Alps closer to central Gaul. He lost some soldiers and many elephants in his legendary crossing of the Alps, but he achieved his goal: He surprised the Romans, who had not had enough time to prepare for the upcoming war. Before him lay an open path into Italy.

BATTLE AT THE TREBIA

The Romans lost a minor engagement to Hannibal in 218 B.C. at the Ticinus River, where the consul Scipio, wounded and surrounded by enemy cavalry, was saved by his seventeen-year-old son. Seeing his father in danger, the young Scipio ran away from the soldiers who had been assigned to protect him, and rescued his father. This boy, P. Cornelius Scipio, later earned the honorary title Africanus for his conquests.

Later that year the Romans faced Hannibal at the river Trebia. Here the weakness of the Roman system of consuls showed itself, for one consul, Scipio, was still wounded and did not wish to have a battle, but the other consul, Sempronius, urged him to go ahead and engage with the Carthaginian forces, which had been augmented by Gauls. Hannibal, knowing of the Romans' divided command and of the proud and passionate personality of Sempronius, worked to lay a trap for the Romans.

A stream separated the two armies. The night before the battle, Hannibal hid his brother Mago, with a thousand cavalry and another thousand of his toughest foot soldiers, behind the bushes and shrubs of the stream. At dawn he ordered his Numidian cavalry to lure the Romans to battle with an attack, but then to quickly withdraw. At dawn the Numidian cavalry attacked the Roman camp and quickly retreated. The Romans, without eating breakfast, surprised by the attack, hurried out into the December cold to pursue the attackers. In their pursuit they crossed the frigid, swollen waters of the stream, so deep it reached their necks. Hannibal's soldiers, meanwhile, sat in front of their campfires, leisurely eating a hot breakfast and rubbing themselves down with warm oil.

The two sides—one cold, hungry, wet, and tired, and the other warm, rested, and ready to fight—met for battle. Hannibal's elephants immediately scared off the Roman cavalry; when the Romans found a way to defend themselves from the elephants, Hannibal had the elephants attack Rome's Gallic auxiliaries, who fled at the elephants' attack. The Romans, already suffering from cold, hunger, and exhaustion, and worn down by the tough Carthaginian troops, then were attacked in the rear by Mago and

the troops that had been hiding behind the bushes; the Romans were surrounded.

Part of the Roman army fought its way through the Carthaginian center, only to find itself trapped by the river and unable to return to camp. Those who hesitated to jump in and swim to the camp were cut down by the Numidian cavalry, while those who braved the river risked death by drowning or exposure. Hannibal's victory was complete and devastating. The Romans lost approximately thirty thousand men.

TRASIMENE: "PUGNA MAGNA VICTI SUMUS"

In the next year Hannibal did not relax after his stunning victory. He learned that the Roman consul Flaminius had arrived at Arretium, in Etruria; instead of taking a long but easy path to Arretium, Hannibal chose to travel through swamps. For four days he and his men struggled through the swamps, able to snatch only a few moments of sleep on the heaps of dead pack animals. Hannibal himself, riding his last surviving elephant, came down with an eye infection and lost sight in that eye. Nonetheless his sudden arrival surprised the Romans, and he was able to seize more strategic ground. After a few days' rest, his troops then ravaged the countryside, in full view of the Romans, to anger Flaminius and his troops. Despite his officers' advice that he should wait for the other consul and his army, Flaminius ordered his troops to prepare for a battle with Hannibal. All the omens for battle were bad: When Flaminius jumped onto his horse, it threw him from the saddle, and the standards could not be pulled from the ground—they would not budge.

Hannibal then marched into an area by Lake Trasimene. On one side was the lake, and on the other side were the mountains, with only a small path for an exit. Along that small path the Romans followed Hannibal, not knowing that the night before he had hidden some troops in the mountains north of the lake, and that he had stationed his cavalry to block the path once the Romans had come into the trap. The Romans blindly followed him.

The Carthaginians suddenly swarmed down from the hills, catching the Romans unprepared for battle. The Roman army,

which was not able even to see where the enemy was coming from, because of the mist rising from the lake, disintegrated into chaos. More than fifteen thousand Romans—not counting allies—were killed in the battle, including the consul Flaminius. Again, Hannibal had won a smashing victory. Nor was this the last of his exploits: The worst was still to come.

**Q. FABIVS MAXIMVS CUNCTATOR:
“VNVS HOMO NOBIS CUNCTANDO RESTITVIT REM”**

“In Rome, at the first news of the disaster [at Trasimene], the people in terror and panic rushed into the Forum. Mothers wandering through the streets asked those passing by what unexpected disaster had been visited upon Rome, or what the fate of the army was. When a mob, like a packed assembly, summoned the magistrates, the praetor M. Pomponius, just a little before sunset, said only this: ‘We have been conquered in a great battle’” (“*Pugna magna victi sumus*”); Livy XXII.7.6–8).

The situation in Rome was clearly desperate enough to warrant appointing a dictator. After some difficulties—only a consul could do so, but one consul was dead and the other was away from Rome—the Senate appointed as dictator Q. Fabius Maximus (later called Cunctator, from the verb *cunctor*, “to delay”).

Seeing that Hannibal had defeated the Romans in two set battles, Fabius realized that the wiser approach would be not to engage Hannibal in a battle; instead, the Romans would follow him, harassing his troops with guerrilla-type warfare, working to keep the Italian allies loyal, and trying to isolate Hannibal from supplies and reinforcements. This policy of attrition was successful, for Hannibal could inflict no more losses upon the Romans, while the Romans simply attacked Hannibal’s men as they sought water, firewood, and food for their horses (with four thousand cavalry, Hannibal needed a lot of fodder for the horses). Hannibal quickly understood Fabius’ intention, and tried to lure him into a trap, but Fabius was too wary and cautious. His characteristic caution gave rise to an adjective in English, *Fabian*, meaning “cautious, dilatory.”

At one point, Hannibal was penned in a valley by the Romans, who controlled the surrounding mountain passes. Hannibal could not get provisions for his army and cavalry, while the Roman armies had easy access to food and water. Nor could Hannibal fight his way out of the predicament, for the Romans had the superior position. So the wily Hannibal devised still another brilliant plan to extricate himself:

Pieces of dry wood, collected from the fields all around, and bundles of dry twigs and brushwood were tied onto the horns of the many cattle that he had among the loot taken from the countryside. After that had been done to nearly two thousand cattle, Hasdrubal [one of Hannibal’s officers] was assigned the task of setting the cattle’s horns on fire that night and driving them toward the mountains and most of all (if he could) above the passes held by the enemy.

They broke camp in silence after nightfall. The cattle were driven some distance in front of the standards. When they arrived at the foot of the mountains and narrow passes, the signal was immediately given to light the cattle’s horns and to drive them toward the mountains. The beasts’ fear of the flames burning on their own heads, and the heat, by now reaching the skin and nerves, drove the cattle on in a frenzy, as if they had been whipped.

Their sudden scattering made the forest and mountains appear as if they had been set on fire, and the brushwood all around was blazing. The desperate shaking of their heads fanned the flames, giving forth the appearance of men scattering everywhere. When the men who had been stationed to block the passes saw the fires in the peaks of the mountains and above themselves, they concluded that they were surrounded, and left their posts. (Livy XXII.16.7–XXII.17.4)

In the confusion, Hannibal and his men managed to escape from the valley.

Fabius, despite the wisdom of his policy, was becoming unpopular among his countrymen. His master of the horse, Minucius, urged him to fight a battle with Hannibal and maligned Fabius’ strategy in public and in private. When Fabius had to return to Rome briefly, to attend to a religious matter, Minucius won a minor engagement with Hannibal and became even more self-

assured. His criticism of Fabius intensified. The people of Rome, moreover, feeling more and more confident because Rome had suffered no recent catastrophes, urged the Senate to have the troops fight a set battle with Hannibal and his army. Finally, the Senate split the command between Fabius and Minucius. When the two commanders were discussing how they would manage one army, Fabius insisted that they split the army and that each be in full command of his half, rather than alternating days of command over the whole army. Thus, Fabius figured, Minucius would destroy only half the army if he made a mistake. The two split the army and cavalry, and even constructed different camps.

Fabius was right. Minucius was promptly led into a trap by Hannibal. Fabius, seeing Minucius' army in great danger of being destroyed, rescued the errant commander and his troops, and inflicted great losses upon Hannibal's forces. ("The cloud," Hannibal is reported to have said after the battle, "which has been accustomed to resting among the mountain peaks, has produced a gale and a terrific storm.") After the battle, Minucius returned to Fabius' camp, called him *pater*, and said, "Dictator, I owe my existence to my parents, to whom I just compared you by calling you father, but to you I owe my safety and the safety of all these men here. Therefore I now renounce the people's decision, which has brought me more distress than honor, and renounce my position, and return under your power and authority, and restore these standards and legions to you, so that it may be beneficial to these armies of yours and to me, the one who was saved, and to you, the one who saved" (Livy XXII.30.3-5).

The two men shook hands, and Fabius graciously allowed Minucius to remain his master of the horse. News of the event was brought to Rome, and Fabius' reputation rose higher than ever. Years later in his *Annales*, a poetical treatment of Roman history, the poet Ennius wrote of Fabius, "*unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem*" (one man saved the state for us, by waiting).

When Fabius' dictatorship lapsed, the Romans elected as consuls L. Aemilius Paullus and G. Terentius Varro. Varro swore that he would beat Hannibal and his army on the first day that he saw them. His colleague, Paullus, preferred Fabian tactics. Since the two could not agree on strategy, they alternated their days of command.

DISASTER AT CANNAE

In 216 B.C. Hannibal took up a position near the village of Cannae. The Romans had amassed an army of more than fifty thousand men, hoping to smother Hannibal's army of forty thousand. The Romans, now wary, made sure that there was no place in which Hannibal could conceal troops; nonetheless, Hannibal had other plans for defeating the Romans. On his day of command Varro led the army out to battle, without even consulting Paullus.

Hannibal placed the bulwark of his troops, his veteran Africans, in the rear center of his army and kept his first lines thin. Once the Romans had cut their way through Hannibal's thin front center, Hannibal's flanks closed in on the Romans. Now the tired Romans were not only surrounded but also facing Hannibal's toughest veterans, fresh from sitting out the morning's battle. The Romans were again crushed by Hannibal, losing more than forty-five thousand men, including the consul Paullus, who had advised against a battle with Hannibal, and the two consuls of the previous year. Varro survived; when he returned to Rome from the disaster at Cannae, throngs of citizens came out to meet him, and despite his responsibility for the disaster, they thanked him because "he had not lost hope for the republic."

Rome was in a panic. Not only had the Romans lost a hundred thousand men in the recent battles, but even some Italian allies were deserting Rome: Capua, a city not much inferior to Rome in wealth and population, was one Italian city that revolted. The Gauls in the north were taking Hannibal's side. Many of the Greeks in the south, including those of Tarentum, revolted. The Samnites sided with Hannibal. Sicily and its chief city Syracuse, ruled now by Hiero's grandson, also joined Hannibal. Nonetheless, most of Rome's Italian allies remained loyal, even though its power in Italy seemed to be collapsing. So desperate were the Romans that they performed a human sacrifice, killing two Gauls and two Greeks. Two Vestal Virgins were found to have broken their oaths of chastity and were punished with being buried alive; the man involved in the scandal turned out to be a minor official in the college of priests. He was beaten to death by the *pontifex maximus*

in a public assembly. Roman women were sweeping the pavements of the temples with their hair. The Romans declared a *Ver Sacrum*, or Sacred Spring, in which all first fruits of the season were dedicated to the gods. After consulting the Sibylline books, they instituted games in honor of Apollo. They dedicated to Jupiter a golden sculpture of a thunderbolt, weighing fifty pounds. To put an end to these expressions of panic, the consuls decided that women should be forbidden to appear out of doors, family mourning should be checked, and silence should be imposed everywhere. The government of Rome then bought eight thousand slaves from their owners and armed them; later, the Romans even opened their jails, with offers of freedom and forgiveness for the criminals and debtors, if they would join the army.

Despite the emergency in Rome, the Romans maintained their courage and discipline. The Senate decided not to pay the ransom for those soldiers held by Hannibal after Cannae, and even forbade the soldier's families to pay. Hannibal sent a group of Roman prisoners to beg the Senate to pay the ransom of the thousands of Romans whom he was holding prisoner; before letting them leave, he made them swear that they would return to his camp. One of the prisoners, while leaving Hannibal's camp, claimed that he had forgotten something in the camp and returned to get it; then he went to Rome to address the Senate. After addressing the Senate, he did not return to Hannibal's camp with the others, for he had already fulfilled his obligation of returning to the camp. When the Senate learned of his deceit, it had him arrested and taken in chains to Hannibal. Those soldiers who managed to escape Cannae with their lives were punished for bad soldiering by being sent to Sicily, where they spent most of the war, begging for an opportunity to redeem themselves and regain their honor.

Many stories of the Romans' courage and character explain how they were able to survive the war and eventually to conquer Hannibal. For example, the former dictator Q. Fabius Maximus was overseeing the election of new consuls for the year 214; the first tribe voted for Marcus Aemilius Regillus and Titus Otacilius Crassus, the latter of whom was the husband of Fabius' niece. Fabius objected to both decisions and asked the tribe to reconsider:

Regillus was a priest and could not leave the city, while Otacilius had not seen enough action to be an excellent general.

"Citizens," Fabius said, "I urgently advise you to elect consuls today in the same spirit that you would if you were the ones standing in battle formation, armed and ready for battle: under whose leadership and control would you want to fight? Let your sons take their oaths to the same men you would want to, let them gather at those men's orders, and let them fight under such men's care and oversight. Remembering Lake Trasimene and Cannae is painful, but provides useful lessons for avoiding similar catastrophes in the future." (Livy XXIV.8.18-20)

The voters reconsidered their decision and elected as consuls Fabius himself (for the fourth time) and Marcus Marcellus (for the third time), both of whom had ample experience in battle. Later, in 210, Manlius Torquatus, although elected to the consulship, refused the honor because his eyes were too weak, and ordered the tribe to vote again.

Another example of the Romans' courage and character is the consuls' edict in 210 for citizens to pay more money for oarsmen in the fleet. The people were already heavily taxed to pay for the war, and many had little or no income, either because their farms had been destroyed by Hannibal's foragers or because the men were serving in the army. The people protested. The consul Laevinus summoned the Senate and said, "Just as it is necessary that the magistrates lead the Senate and the Senate lead the people, because we are more honorable, so it is necessary that there be a leader for enduring all things harsh and bitter. If you wish to impose some order on a person lower in rank, if you first impose it on yourself and your kin, you will have other people obeying you more readily" (Livy XXVI.36.1-3). He adjourned the Senate; the senators went home and then returned, bringing their gold, silver, and bronze. The knights learned of the senators' contributions and brought their wealth, too; and last, the common people likewise brought in theirs. The government had ample money for the ships' crews and was able to repay that loan from the citizens a few years later.

THE SCIPIOS IN SPAIN

The Romans at this time were also fighting in Spain, to deprive Hannibal of supplies and reinforcements coming from Spain and to prevent the great wealth of Spain—mostly in metals—from falling into Carthaginian hands. The two Roman generals there, Gn. Cornelius Scipio and his brother P. Cornelius Scipio, had made use of arms and diplomacy to slowly detach the Spanish people from loyalty to Carthage. Unfortunately both Scipios were defeated and killed in two separate battles in 211. The Spanish then returned to supporting Carthage. The Romans elected the son of Gnaeus, Publius Cornelius Scipio (who as a boy had saved his father's life at Ticinus), to succeed the two dead generals, although he was only twenty-four years old. Publius Cornelius Scipio surpassed his relatives in fame and accomplishments.

After arriving in Spain in 210, Scipio did not dally. He immediately attacked and sacked the strongly fortified and wealthy city of New Carthage, the capital of Carthaginian Spain. He won an immense amount of loot that the Carthaginians had stored there and by his diplomacy won some allies as well: He let the citizens of New Carthage go free, retain their property, and live in their city. An example of his diplomacy involves a beautiful young woman whom his soldiers brought to him, perhaps so she could be his concubine; Scipio asked her her name, and where she was from. She told him that she was engaged to Allucius, the chief of a nearby tribe. Scipio sent for her family and fiancé; he handed the young woman over to her family unharmed, refused the ransom that they offered, and gave her and her fiancé the gift (a weight of solid gold) that her parents had begged him to take. The young man, in gratitude, returned to Scipio a few days later, accompanied by fourteen hundred cavalry, to serve in Scipio's army. As another example, Scipio learned that among the African prisoners from New Carthage was a boy of royal blood. The boy, who had been raised by his grandfather, had joined the cavalry to fight against the Romans, against the orders of his uncle Masinissa. Scipio gave the boy many gifts—among them a gold ring—and an armed guard to escort him as far as he needed to go. Masinissa was the ousted king of the Numidians, whose help was invaluable to Scipio in later battles.

One battle that Scipio won deserves notice because it gave rise to an important word in Latin. The story goes that after defeating the Carthaginians in one battle, Scipio set free ten thousand Spaniards whom he had taken captive. To honor Scipio and show their respect and gratitude, the Spaniards began calling him *rex* (king); Scipio knew that under no circumstances could he allow himself to be called king (recall that the early Romans had driven out their kings to establish the republic), yet he wanted the peoples he defeated to have some term of respect and honor for him. He thanked them for the honor, but asked them to call him *imperator* instead; from then on, *imperator* became the word used to honor victorious generals, and an army would not honor its general (*dux*) with the title *imperator* (conquering general) until he had won a major battle.

ROME REGAINS MOMENTUM: "VICTORIA UTI NESCIIS"

The Romans had a little bit of luck in the middle of all the catastrophes. When Hannibal's friends were congratulating him at Cannae, Maharbal, Hannibal's commander of cavalry, urged him to attack Rome immediately. He said, "Hannibal, so you may understand the significance of this battle, let me tell you this: on the fifth day, you'll be enjoying a victory feast on the Capitol. Come after me; I'll go first with the cavalry, so that I will arrive before they even know that I'm coming" (Livy XXII.51.2).

Hannibal replied that he needed some time to think about it. "Hannibal, you know how to win a battle, but you don't know how to use your victory [*victoria uti nescis*]," Maharbal replied. Hannibal missed his great opportunity; the Romans later believed that his indecision saved Rome.

By dogged persistence and unflinching courage the Romans regained the upper hand. Hannibal was in hostile territory, which made it difficult for him to get supplies for his army and cavalry. The Italians were not deserting from the Romans to his side as he thought they would. He could not besiege Rome, for he needed always to be moving, simply to secure food and supplies for his soldiers and horses, and in any case he lacked siege equipment. He was losing men through many small battles with the Romans and

from the ravages of disease and hunger. He and his troops spent the winter of 216 B.C. in Capua, where they lost their fighting edge and discipline; so changed was Hannibal's army after the winter spent in that decadent city that one Roman general, Marcellus, called Capua "Hannibal's Cannae." (Imagine an army bivouacked in the French Quarter of New Orleans for the winter. How sharp would the soldiers be, come March?) Eventually Rome regained Capua, Tarentum, and Sicily. When Hannibal at last marched to the gates of Rome and waited for the battle to begin, he learned through a prisoner that the land on which he had pitched camp was sold that day in Rome, with no reduction in price.

The Romans regained the momentum partly through the successes of their general M. Claudius Marcellus (the winner of the *spolia opima*; see chapter 13). He had the caution of Fabius, but combined with a greater boldness; the Romans called Fabius the Shield of Rome, but to Marcellus they gave the nickname Sword of Rome. After Capua revolted to Hannibal's side, Marcellus prevented Hannibal from attacking another large Campanian city, Nola.

In 214, when Sicily revolted from Rome, Marcellus was sent to reconquer the island. He attacked Syracuse by land and sea, but was foiled by its most brilliant citizen, the famous geometrician Archimedes. It was Archimedes who figured out the principle of the lever, saying, "Give me a place on which to stand, and I will move the Earth." He also discovered the principle of displacement of water, which caused him to exclaim, "Eureka!" (I have found it!). Archimedes used his great knowledge to build various engines to defend his city. Some of his devices threw quantities of rocks at the Roman army, killing soldiers and throwing the army into confusion. Another device was a huge beam, hanging out from the city walls over the sea, where the Roman navy was attacking. Some beams dropped great weights on the Roman ships, sinking them, while others, with iron claws at the end, simply picked up the Roman ships and hauled them out of the water; the beam then either released the suspended ship, allowing it to fall into the water, or else was swung around, dashing the ship against the rocks.

Marcellus was forced simply to starve Syracuse into giving up. While besieging Syracuse, he also reconquered the rest of the island. He finally took Syracuse in 211. Archimedes was killed by

a Roman soldier; according to the story, the soldier commanded Archimedes to accompany him to Marcellus, but Archimedes refused to move until he had finished the problem he was working on. Enraged, the soldier killed him.

After reconquering Sicily, Marcellus returned to Italy, and from 210 to 208 he kept Hannibal's activities under control. Hannibal tried many times to lure Marcellus into a trap, but Marcellus was his match in wits. Under Marcellus' leadership the Roman army inflicted many small losses on Hannibal, killing thousands of his soldiers and reestablishing morale in the Roman army. Marcellus was killed in 208 B.C., while on reconnaissance.

In Spain too the pendulum had swung to the Romans' side. Scipio had been so successful in conquering Spain for Rome that the Carthaginian government abandoned its hope of a Carthaginian empire in Spain and ordered Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother who led the Carthaginian forces in Spain, to take his armies to Hannibal in Italy. Hasdrubal started his march.

THE BATTLE AT METAURUS

The Romans and the Italians were alarmed by the news that Hasdrubal was approaching Italy; his army was as large as Hannibal's, and his own reputation only slightly less than his brother's. One consul, Marcus Livius, had been assigned to northern Italy to intercept Hasdrubal; the other consul, G. Claudius Nero, had been assigned to southern Italy to check Hannibal's progress. After an engagement with Hannibal's troops, in which the Romans inflicted heavy losses upon the Carthaginians, Nero decided to leave half of his army with a praetor to guard Hannibal, while he with the other half would secretly slip away at night to lend help to Livius and his troops. He and his soldiers then marched 400 kilometers in seven days, to join Livius in the north. Both Carthaginians had been fooled: Hannibal thought an entire consular army was still dogging him, and since Livius and Nero shared the same camp, Hasdrubal did not know—until it was too late—that the Roman forces facing him had been augmented by six thousand soldiers.

The battle at the river Metaurus, in 207, avenged Cannae for the Romans. Hasdrubal was killed in the battle, his army annihilated,

and an immense amount of gold and silver taken; Hannibal would not receive reinforcements now. The Roman populace was hysterical with joy, for the Romans had won their first major engagement against the Carthaginians in Italy; every shrine and temple in the city was garlanded with flowers and wreaths. Nero returned to his army in southern Italy and had Hasdrubal's head thrown in front of the outposts of Hannibal's camp, to be taken to Hannibal.

SCIPIO CARRIES THE WAR TO AFRICA

While briefing the Senate on affairs in Spain, Scipio brought up the idea of invading Africa; his reasons were, first, to punish the Africans and cause them to suffer, for Italy had been the battleground long enough; second, and more important, to force the Carthaginians to recall Hannibal to Africa to defend Carthage. The wisdom of his proposal was not apparent to all the senators; it was vigorously opposed by Q. Fabius Maximus, who argued that Scipio and the soldiers should stay in Italy to eliminate the real and present danger of Hannibal.

In spite of opposition, Scipio received the Senate's grudging approval, but he was not given permission to enlist new soldiers, and the Senate supplied him with only thirty-five warships for his expedition. Scipio sought volunteers and contributions of war materials, and the Italians responded: Seven thousand soldiers immediately volunteered, eagerly joined by the twelve thousand survivors of Cannae, who were still desperate for an opportunity to regain their honor, and more allies joined them as well. Contributions of various war materials—iron, cloth for sails, timber for ships, wheat—poured in. When Scipio landed in Africa the next year, he was joined by Masinissa (Rome's ally from Numidia), and the army numbered approximately thirty-five thousand soldiers. Scipio and Masinissa ravaged the countryside.

Hasdrubal (not Hannibal's brother, who had been killed) and his ally Syphax from Numidia encamped a few miles from the Romans. Scipio, using Hannibal-like tactics, first played a deadly trick on Syphax: Scipio had sent some centurions, disguised as slaves, along with his envoys in the customary attempts at

negotiating peace before a battle; Scipio learned from his spies that the buildings in Syphax' camp were made of reeds. This gave Scipio an idea, and he took his officers aside, explained the plan, and made it clear that everything had to go just right.

Laelius, Scipio's good friend and lieutenant, went forth first that night, and soon afterwards Scipio left with other soldiers and stopped not far from Syphax' camp. Scipio then saw that Laelius had succeeded in his mission: Syphax' camp was on fire. When the whole camp was ablaze, Scipio and his men rushed forward, massacring the men who ran out to escape the flames. Hasdrubal's men too rushed from their camp to help put out the fire; they too were butchered (but not in such great numbers). They never suspected that the fire had been set deliberately. The Carthaginians lost approximately forty thousand men. The Carthaginian government was then forced to recall Hannibal from Italy so he could defend Carthage.

Hannibal with difficulty escaped from Italy—the Romans were doing their utmost to destroy his army—and returned to Carthage. He faced Scipio at Zama in 202 B.C. Masinissa and his cavalry ran the Carthaginian cavalry off the battlefield, and the Roman light-armed troops so scared the elephants that they rampaged and turned on the Carthaginian troops. The Roman infantry then engaged the Carthaginians in a hard-fought battle; with the battle undecided, Masinissa and his cavalry returned, surrounding the Carthaginians and cutting them down. Hannibal escaped the Roman soldiers and forced his government to sue for peace.

The terms of the treaty allowed the Carthaginians a fleet of only ten ships, forbade them to wage war without Rome's consent, forced them to pay a war indemnity of ten thousand talents of silver, and barred them from keeping war elephants.

Rome was now a world power, having conquered its sole rival in the western Mediterranean. It had made allies in Africa, to help in the defeat of Carthage, and thus held Carthage in its grip. Further, it had conquered much of Spain and parts of southern Gaul, to disrupt Hannibal's supply lines; these areas soon became the provinces of Hispania and Gallia Cisalpina. Since King Philip V of Macedon had made a treaty with Hannibal during the war, and might have delivered some assistance to him, Rome soon found

itself in wars with Macedon, which involved Rome in affairs Hellenic. Rome's relations with Greece and the East led to the conquest of Asia Minor. The defeat of Carthage launched Rome into world prominence, from which position it would not fall for more than seven hundred years.

CHAPTER 15

Rome Encounters the East

After defeating Hannibal and Carthage, and in the process becoming masters of the western Mediterranean, the Romans wanted peace and quiet, but with security. Instead, they became involved in the political troubles of the eastern Mediterranean, which threatened not only their recent conquests, but also their very existence. The politics of the kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean are somewhat complicated; some background information will be helpful.

THE HELLENISTIC EAST

Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, during his short life (356–323 B.C.) had united the Greeks in an invasion of the Persian Empire. Supposedly, the reason was to get revenge for the Persians' invasion of Greece and destruction of its houses and temples in 491–479, but the real reason was economic. The young men of Greece, seeing no future at home, found work as mercenaries in the army of the Persian king, Darius III, thus strengthening Greece's mortal enemy while weakening Greece itself.

After crossing the Hellespont (present-day Dardanelles, the narrow strait that separates Asia from Europe) in 334, Alexander and his army marched along the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), defeating Darius in two separate battles, at Granicus and Issus. Alexander and his army then continued marching south through Syria, Palestine, and Israel, and entered Egypt. There Alexander founded a city off the westernmost tributary of the Nile, and named it Alexandria. Then he continued east in pursuit of

History Terms for Paul Zoch, 101-116, The Second Punic War

The Ebro River

Saguntum

The Alps

The Battle of Trebia, and the Roman Consular System

Hannibal's Surprising Speed

The Battle of Lake Trasimene

Quintus Fabius Cunctator

Battle of Cannae and Aftermath

Roman Courage and Character

Carthaginian Spain

Victoria Uti Nescis

Archimedes and his War Engines

The Battle of Zama

Terms of War

Hannibal Barca

Publius Cornelius Scipio "Africanus"

